



“Iron Jawed Angels”

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Interagency Committee for Change by Women

This is an recitation of an e-mail that has been circulating. It is regarding a movie called "Iron Jawed Angels". ICCW is looking into providing an opportunity to view this movie and have some discussion following.

This is a story of our Grandmothers and Great-Grandmothers years ago. Remember it was not until 1920 that women were granted the right to go to the polls and vote.



The women were innocent and defenseless, but they were jailed nonetheless for picketing the White House, carrying signs asking for the vote.

And by the end of the night, they were barely alive. Forty prison guards wielding clubs and their warden's blessing went on a rampage against the 33 women wrongly convicted of "obstructing sidewalk traffic".

They beat Lucy Burns, chained her hands to the cell bars above her head and left her hanging for the night, bleeding, and gasping for air.



Lucy Burns

They hurled Dora Lewis into a dark cell, smashed her head against an iron bed, and knocked her out cold. Her cellmate, Alice Cosu, thought Lewis was dead and suffered a heart attack. Additional affidavits described the guards grabbing, dragging, beating, choking, slamming, pinching, twisting, and kicking the women.

Doris Lewis

Thus unfolded the "Night of Terror" on November 15, 1917, when the warden at the Occoquan Workhouse in Virginia ordered guards to teach a lesson to the suffragists imprisoned there because they dared to picket Woodrow Wilson's White House for the right to vote.

For weeks, the women's only water came from an open pail. Their food—all of it colorless slop—was infested with worms.

When one of the leaders, Alice Paul, embarked on a hunger strike, they tied her to a chair, forced a tube



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down her throat and poured liquid into her until she vomited. She was tortured like this for weeks until word was smuggled out to the press.

So, refresh my memory. Some women won't vote this year because—why, exactly? We have carpool duties? We have to get to work? Our vote doesn't matter? It's raining?

Last week, I went to a sparsely attended screening of HBO's new movie "Iron Jawed Angels." It is a graphic depiction of the battle these women waged so that I could pull the curtain at the polling booth and have my say. I am ashamed to say I needed the reminder.

All these years later, voter registration is still my passion. But the actual act of voting had become less personal for me, more rote. Frankly, voting often felt more like an obligation than a privilege. Sometimes it was inconvenient.

My friend Wendy, who is my age and studied women's history, saw the HBO movie, too. When she stopped by my desk to talk about it, she looked angry. She was—with herself. "One thought kept coming back to me as I watched that movie," she said. "What would those women think of the way I use, or don't use, my right to vote? All of us take it for granted now, not just younger women, but those of us who did seek to learn. The right to vote," she said, "had become valuable to her all over again."



Berthe Arnold,
CSU graduate

We are not voting in the numbers that we

should be, and I think a little shock therapy is in order. It is jarring to watch Woodrow Wilson and his cro-



Pauline Adams in prison garb she wore while serving a 60 day sentence.

nies try to persuade a psychiatrist to declare Alice Paul insane so that she could be permanently institutionalized. And it is inspiring to watch the doctor refuse. Alice Paul was strong, he said, and brave. The doctor admonished the men: "Courage in women is often mistaken for insanity."

Please pass this on to all the women you know. We need to get out and vote and use this right that was fought so hard for by these very courageous women.



Helena Hill Weed, Norwalk, Conn, serving a 3 day sentence in DC prison for carrying banner, "Governments derive powers form the consent of the governed."

Source: Connie Schultz, The Plain Dealer, 1801 Superior Ave., Cleveland, OH 44114, CSchultz@plaind.com., August, 2004.

Battle Won, But Not The War

— Barbara A. Bessey

A small group of women and men viewed the film "Iron Jawed Angels" at Carroll College. It was an extraordinary film fueled with emotion. I say this honestly from my heart, the film stirred emotions that ranged from anger, laughter, empathy, shock, pride, and Yes, I even teared. Even if you know the history of the events, the film is such a passionate portrayal of the suffrage movement, you feel gripped and pulled into the moment. Hilary Swank (Alice Paul), Frances O'Connor (Lucy Burns), Julia Ormond (Inez Milholland), Molly Parker (Emily Leighton — Sen. Leighton's wife), and Anjelica Huston (Carrie Chapman Catt) played their characters with passion and dignity. Brook Smith (Mabel Vernon) and Patrick Dempsey (Ben Weissman), both from Grey's Anatomy, were exceptional outside of their normal characters as doctors.

What these brave and courageous women started still isn't finished. Yes, women won the right to vote, but part of the idealism of the right to vote was to create equality between men and women under the constitution. Women are still a long way from being completely equal with men. The glass ceiling has some cracks in it, but, it hasn't been shattered yet. So, the war hasn't been won. We're still working on it.



Alice Paul